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A Short Sociology of the Japan Anthropology Workshop

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When the Japan Anthropology Workshop (known as JAWS) held its first meeting in Oxford in 1984 with twenty-five participants, few would have believed that when it held its 12th meeting in 1999, it would need to create seven separate workshops to accommodate the diverse demands and interests of its 230 members. The reasons for this exponential growth in membership offer interesting insights into developments in the study of Japan and the field of anthropology during the intervening period.

JAWS was conceived in the 1980s by a small band of anthropologists of Japan who were based in Europe and who knew of each other's existence, but who had until then worked very much in isolation. Since its first meeting—convened by Joy Hendry who also acted as Secretary for the first ten years of the Workshop—JAWS has met every eighteen months or so, alternate workshops coinciding with the triennial meetings of the European Association of Japanese Studies (EAJS). Each workshop has had one or two convenors and a single theme and each has resulted, or is about to result, in the publication of an edited volume of papers (a full list is given below). In addition, a newsletter is sent out twice a year to all members. This level of activity is probably higher than most voluntarily-run, international academic organisations, but it does not fully explain why JAWS has grown at such a rate.

A close examination of the JAWS membership shows a number of interesting trends. Firstly, there has, since the mid-1980s, been an exponential growth at all levels in Japanese studies in Europe (the original home of JAWS), in the US,¹ and in Australasia. This of course was related to the strength of the Japanese economy and indeed many overseas centres received financial support from Japanese public and private sources as well as from their own governments.² The bulk of this money was put into new posts in contemporary Japanese society—economics, politics, modern history and sociology or social anthropology. Part of the growth of JAWS' membership can be related to the

demographics of this expansion and is particularly visible in the large number of doctoral students (around 50) among the current membership.³

A second noticeable feature of the JAWS membership list is that many of its paid-up members are not, and do not claim to be, anthropologists but come from neighbouring disciplines such as geography, politics, history, psychology, cultural studies,

In the last issue we had two articles on Japanese studies: 'Japanese Studies in Europe' by Joseph Kreiner and 'Some Observations on Japanese Studies Abroad' by Isao Kumakura. In the present issue we bring another two articles with different perspectives on the same topic.

The Editor

Contents

- Roger Goodman
A Short Sociology of the Japan Anthropology Workshop 1
- Takashi Fujitani
The Past and Future of Japanese Studies in the U.S. 3
- Charles Keyes
From Ethnology to the Politics of Ethnicity 5
- Thomas M. Ernst
Change, Continuity and Cultural Identity 7
- Exhibition 9
- Conferences 10
- Visiting Scholars 11
- Publications 12

MIINP A K U
Anthropology Newsletter

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1) There was at one time a plan to set up a US-based counterpart to JAWS, known provisionally as JAWS 2. After this failed to get off the ground for various reasons, many American anthropologists of Japan decided to join the original JAWS.

2) Following the Parker Report in the UK in the early 1980s, four new centres for Japanese studies were opened and new posts created at the already existing four centres. Undergraduate student numbers increased dramatically and a number of graduate scholarships were offered by the Department of Trade and Industry as well as by the Department of Education and Science.

3) The demographics of academic reproduction is a surprisingly understudied field. Where academics around the world enjoy academic tenure until retirement, there is an interesting question of how often they should ideally reproduce themselves (in the form of successful PhD students) over a life-time given that few fields expand continuously. In 1998, there are currently more than forty doctoral research students working on Japan-related subjects at Oxford University alone, of which the vast majority are working in contemporary fields.

4) In 1994 there was a seminar series at the Institute of Social and Cultural

business studies and sociology. For all of them, anthropology offers interesting and important insights into the study of Japan which they can draw upon and incorporate into their work within their own discipline. This is indeed a feature that, in Britain at least, has become increasingly conspicuous over the past decade as the theoretical ideas and methodological practices of social anthropology have played an increasingly important role in the work of other disciplines.⁴⁾ To some extent, anthropology has become a unifying discipline that spans the arts, sciences and social sciences and this has always been recognised in JAWS' open-door membership.

A third interesting feature of the JAWS membership is its inclusion of a number of mainstream anthropologists who are not specialists of Japan. It has always been an aim of the Workshop to help bring the study of Japan into the mainstream of social anthropology from which it has generally been excluded,⁵⁾ and indeed there is no doubt that the publication record of JAWS—together with the growth in the number of teachers and researchers in the field outlined above—has done much to bring about this change in attitude towards work on Japan within the discipline as a whole.

As JAWS has grown so has it become more international. As of September 1997, its 230 members came from no less than 24 countries. Perhaps most significantly for an organisation that had its roots in Europe, though, is that more members (55) now reside in Japan than in any other country. In 1999, JAWS will hold its first meeting in Japan—at Minpaku.

While the past fifteen years have in many ways been a success story for JAWS, there is no doubt that, as any

anthropologist knows, any society (and perhaps especially an academic one) which develops beyond a certain size and contains within it a variety of specialisms must at some point move from a mechanical to an organic form of solidarity or face potential fission. It is to counteract what might otherwise be such a 'natural' process that the next JAWS meeting will for the first time turn away from the single theme format and is constructed around seven separate workshops, in which papers will be given by a small number of selected speakers who are specialists in the chosen area—material culture, popular culture, corporate culture, sport, social policy, the body and intellectual traditions—and where there will be plenty of time for discussants and discussion. As professional anthropologists, it will be interesting to see if this style of conference organisation will contradict Durkheim's and Evans-Pritchard's theories about solidarity and fission and enable JAWS to get through a crucial phase of its development and into the next century as a diverse-yet-unified organisation at the forefront of the anthropology of Japan.

The twelfth JAWS Meeting will take place at Minpaku between 10–14 March 1999. For more information, please contact the convenors, Nakamaki, Hirochika and Roger Goodman, at Minpaku, or look at the conference homepage on: <http://www.minpaku.ac.jp/jaws/>.

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Hendry, Joy and Jonathan Webber (eds) 1986. *Interpreting Japanese Society: Anthropological Approaches* (JASO Occasional Publication Series, No. 5), Oxford. (A completely revised second edition was published by Routledge in

JAWS membership by country of residence as of September 1997

Europe	100	North America	35
Austria	1	Canada	9
Belgium	1	USA	26
Denmark	7	Oceania	27
France	8	Australia	23
Germany	9	New Zealand	4
Holland	9	Asia	68
Italy	9	China (H.K.)	5
Norway	1	Israel	3
Romania	1	Japan	55
Russia	1	Malaysia	1
Spain	5	Singapore	1
Sweden	2	South Korea	3
Switzerland	1		
UK	48	Total	230

1998 with Hendry as the sole editor.) Papers from the second JAWS meeting appeared in a special section of Nish, Ian (ed.) 1988. *Contemporary European Writing on Japan: Scholarly Views from Eastern and Western Europe*. Tenterden: Paul Norbury Publications.

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Goodman, Roger and Kirsten Refsing (eds) 1992. *Ideology and Practice in Modern Japan*. London: Routledge.

Martinez, D.P. and Jan van Bremen (eds) 1994. *Ritual and Ceremony in Japan*. London: Routledge.

Asquith, Pamela and Arne Kalland (eds)

1996. *Japanese Images of Nature: Cultural Perspectives*. Richmond: NIAS-Curzon Press.

Ashkenazi, Michael and John Clammer (eds) forthcoming. *Material Culture in Contemporary Japan*. London: Kegan Paul International.

Joy Hendry and Massimo Raveri (eds) 'Japan at Play: The Ludic and Logic of Power' (manuscript under consideration).

Three more volumes are currently being edited for publication:

Alisal, Maria R. del, Peter Ackerman and Ted Bestor (eds) *Pilgrimage and the International Encounter*.

Befu Harumi and Sylvie Guichard-Anguis (eds) *The Japan Outside Japan*.

Stevens, Carolyn and Wendy Smith (eds) *Popular Culture and Mass Media in Japan*.

Anthropology in Oxford in which scholars from a number of disciplines were asked to come and discuss the influence that anthropological theory played in their work. These included academics from theology, classics, English literature, history and archaeology as well as from the social sciences.

5) Until recently, the major textbooks of anthropology contained virtually no references to Japanese society which tended to be seen as impossible to fit into mainstream anthropological theory.

The Past and Future of Japanese Studies in the U.S.

Takashi Fujitani

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As many scholars have already noted, during the Cold War years modernization theory dominated U.S. Japanese studies and left a lasting imprint on the field. In the 1970s John W. Dower's highly critical and well-researched exposé of the close ties between U.S. Cold War aims and scholarship on East Asia, demonstrated that postwar Japanese studies had been anything but politically neutral. Dower showed how the Marxist historian of Japan, E. H. Norman, had been driven not only out of the field, but to his death as a result of persecution during the height of the Cold War.¹⁾ Thus in its formative years of the 1950s and 1960s, postwar Japanese studies bore an uncanny resemblance to wartime studies of Japan. Like such wartime works as Ruth Benedict's famous *Chrysanthemum and the Sword*, global strategic considerations heavily influenced the directions that postwar Japanese studies would take. Only this time, Japan was to be figured not as the enemy, but as a younger capitalist and liberal democratic sibling.

In an ironic historical twist, the overwhelming weight of the modernization theorists' scholarly works transformed 'Japan' from its wartime image as a nearly demonic and pathological nation into a society that appeared to have been wanting to become like any other nation of the capitalist West ever since the Tokugawa

period. While earlier public discourse on Japan had produced an image of irrationality, postwar social science used the Parsonian version of Weberian theory to construct a Japan that seemed remarkable precisely because of its capacity for rational thought. The seeds of capitalism and even a Japanese version of the Protestant ethic were said to have existed in the Tokugawa period. In short, Japan's modern history was rewritten primarily as a linear narrative of economic and political success, of Japan becoming like the West, sprinkled throughout with praise for the Japanese people's notable cultural achievements.²⁾ The negative dimensions of Japan's modernity, which are in fact those of the Western world as well—including its imperialism, colonialism, the totalizing qualities of its nationalism, the excesses of its disciplinary apparatuses, as well as inequalities of class, gender, region and ethnicity—were almost completely ignored. Of course, even in this rendering of Japan there remained a strong suggestion that Japan was a recalcitrant Other and that its pathological and irrational character might reemerge at any moment.³⁾

Most studies of Japan from the 1950s through the 1970s also produced a homogenous and consensus oriented 'Japan'. This may in part be explained by the strength of the modernization paradigm, for it privileged the story of

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1) Dower, John W. 1975. 'E. H. Norman, Japan and the Uses of History', in John W. Dower, *Origins of the Modern Japanese State*, pp. 3-101. New York: Random House.

2) The representative collection of writings along this vein is the multi-volume series on modernization published by Princeton University Press in the 1960s and early 1970s, *Studies in the Modernization of Japan*. On the Japanese version of the Protestant work ethic, see Bellah, Robert N. 1957. *Tokugawa Religion*. Glencoe, IL: Free Press.

3) A work that reveals this deep-seated psychological fear of Japan—a fear that lay just below the surface of postwar representations of Japan as a friendly follower of and sometimes even a model for the Western capitalist nations—was Karel van Wolferen's 1990 volume, *The Enigma of Japanese Power*. New York: Vintage Books. In the end, van Wolferen took nearly 500 pages to argue that Japan was an enigma after all, a mysterious Other that foreclosed reasonable comprehension.

4) For more on this *minshūshi* historiography, see Takashi Fujitani 1998. 'Minshūshi as Critique of Orientalist Knowledges'. *Positions* 6(2).

5) Smith, T. C. 1959. *The Agrarian Origins of Modern Japan*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

6) For example, see Gordon, Andrew 1985. *The Evolution of Labor Relations in Japan*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press; and Bernstein, Gail (ed.) 1991. *Recreating Japanese Women, 1600-1945*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.

7) Published in book form as Miyoshi, Masao and Harry Harootyan (eds) 1989. *Postmodernism and Japan*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Japan's progress as a national whole. It was not concerned to consider the contradictions, differential interests, and asymmetries of power within a modernizing Japan. Moreover, the structural functionalist anthropological convention of treating other societies and cultures as self-sufficient, integrated wholes, as well as the tendency to consider particular ethnographies as, in the end, renderings of the larger national society or culture, should also be noted. However, this was to change in the late 1970s and 1980s. Increasingly, like social historians and other scholars writing about other parts of the world, and similar to Japanese scholars who were creating the field of 'People's History' (*minshūshi*),⁴⁾ Japan scholars in the U.S. increasingly became attentive to the histories of the 'weak' and of conflict. While T.C. Smith in his seminal 1950s book on agrarian Japan had remarked on the infrequency of peasant uprisings during the Tokugawa period,⁵⁾ from the late 1970s several important works demonstrated that just the opposite had been the case. It became clear that peasant uprisings and appeals for justice from below, culminating in the 'world renewal' (*yonaooshi*) movements of the late Tokugawa period and the Chichibu Incident in the early 1880s, had been endemic for centuries. Important works in labor history as well as women's history followed as well.⁶⁾

Despite these changes, however, with a few very rare exceptions these works in social history did not fundamentally reconsider the epistemological foundations of Japanese studies. Rather, they filled up the space of Japanese studies with important stories of the previously excluded. As a result the scholarly object of 'Japan' became infinitely fuller and more complex, but there was little self-reflection on the practice of historical or ethnographic writing itself, or more generally on the epistemological grounds on which we constitute our objects of study. Put differently, there was still great confidence that there exists a 'thing' that we can confidently label as Japan and that what we must do is to continue to fill up our picture of it. However, the influence of such works as Edward Said's *Orientalism*, James Clifford's and George E. Markus' edited volume, *Writing Culture*, as well as the broader intellectual climate of the 1980s that included post-structuralism and deconstruction, began to shake (if not break) the foundations of Japanese studies.

Leaders in this critical reevaluation of Japanese studies included Harry

Harootyan and Masao Miyoshi. Although there were premonitions in the late 1970s, the publication of their jointly edited special edition of the *South Atlantic Quarterly* on postmodernism in Japan,⁷⁾ signaled the establishment of a major split in Japanese studies. On the one side, there were those receptive to theoretical interventions of the sorts just mentioned, who not only questioned the politics of Japanese studies, but also interrogated the assumptions of the modern disciplines that have informed the entire history of Japanese studies. Thus even while engaging in concrete studies, many scholars have become increasingly reflexive, both about how we constitute our objects of study and about the positions from which we speak and write. We have become sensitive to the fact that our objects of studies, our 'texts', do not simply loom up before us in a pre-politicized and natural way, and that there is a politics to their appearance as natural choices. Thus some scholars in literary studies are not simply studying the Japanese literary canon, but are concerned to understand the processes and the politics by which certain literary texts have achieved canonical status. Similarly, some scholars of the Japanese language have moved from structuralist analyses of Japanese, to a consideration of how Japanese came to be reinvented in modern times and was then deployed in the interests of modern nationalism and imperialism. Some interested in culture, moreover, are attentive not to the wholeness of Japanese culture, but to the complex ways in which power and interests intersect with multiple cultures within Japan, and indeed within particular individuals. Furthermore, a significant minority of historians is aware of the artifice of historical writing and impatient with naïve positivist assumptions about the profession. On the other side, however, there are many scholars who would prefer not to seriously reconsider Japan along these lines. Rarely in written form, but regularly in private conversations among colleagues during the last decade, 'postmodernist' has been used as an epithet to distance these newer movements from more conventional Japanese studies.

To be sure, what I have described are the twin poles of Japanese studies within the humanities and the softer social sciences, and most individuals would locate themselves somewhere in between. Some, including myself, have been much inspired by and are in many ways products of the theoretically informed interrogations of Japanese

studies that have been going on for the last decade and a half or so. Yet we also continue to employ and explore more familiar strategies in the production of academic knowledge—for example, engaging in archival work or writing ethnographies based on 'field work'. Furthermore, most on the side labelled 'postmodernist' would reject the label itself and prefer to be known by their concrete scholarly and political work. Yet there can be no doubt that the self-image of the field of Japanese studies is fracturing along these lines. So will Japanese studies fracture into oblivion? I doubt it. As long as the nation-state form continues to dominate global politics—and despite pronouncements about the end of the nation-state and the rise of transnational corporations—the nation-

state appears in many ways to be as strong as ever. Japanese studies will survive in some form. However, Japanese studies in the next millenium will be qualitatively different from what it has been throughout most of the postwar years, both because of newer theoretical interventions and because it has always been shaped by politics—by politics within the two countries of the U.S. and Japan, the U.S./Japan relationship, and global politics more generally. The end of the Cold War was one important factor in opening up a space for different versions of Japanese studies, and there is no reason to doubt that changing political contexts in the future will continue to deeply impact the directions taken by Japanese studies.

From Ethnology to the Politics of Ethnicity

Charles Keyes

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On November 5th, 1997, while a visiting professor at the National Museum of Ethnology, I had the privilege of attending a ritual event held in the museum. This event, which I was told had been held annually for many years, took place at the Ainu exhibit. This exhibit at Minpaku is of particular importance because it offers thousands of Japanese who will never visit Ainu communities in Hokkaido an opportunity to form some impressions of a people with a very distinctive culture.

Mr Shigeru Kayano (Director of the Ainu Cultural Museum in Nibutani, Hokkaido), his wife and two other Ainu people officiated at the event which was attended by Dr Naomichi Ishige, the Director-General of the Museum, and a large number of faculty and staff members. Mr Kayano wore a jacket with Ainu motifs, and sat in front of a fire inside an Ainu house built for the museum. That a fire should be allowed inside the museum with its extremely valuable collections was an indication of the significance attached by the Museum to this event. Mr Kayano used the smoke and flames from the fire to call the spirits of the ancestors and encouraged others to follow his lead. A ritual community was created by sharing sake poured in a lacquer cup and passed to guests. This ritual sharing was continued in a Museum conference room where a meal of Ainu foods—salted trout wrapped in seaweed, salmon roe, raw

salmon paste, a soup made with salmon, and a rice gruel with salmon in it—was served to all the museum faculty and staff.

This event was very much akin to another that I attended on May 9th, 1998 at the Burke Museum of Natural History and Culture on the University of Washington campus in my home town of Seattle, Washington. On this day, members of the Lao-American community in Seattle gathered at the museum to orchestrate and participate in a set of events associated with a ritual that has long been central to Lao culture, the *boun bang fai* or fire-rocket festival.

A Lao-American community had been created in Seattle following the success of the Lao Peoples' Revolutionary Party (the Lao Communist Party) in taking over the government of Laos in 1975. Tens of thousands of people from Laos fled the country, and most eventually were resettled in Australia, France, Canada, and, especially, the United States. Those Lao who settled in Washington state became the nucleus of what would eventually become the third largest Lao-American community in the United States.

In the early 1990s, the Burke Museum began an ambitious project to create a new set of exhibits around the theme of 'Pacific Voices'. The purpose of the project was to make the museum a venue for telling through exhibits, photos

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and words the stories of peoples of the Pacific Rim who are members of significant communities in Washington state. Professor Miriam Kahn, an anthropologist and curator at the museum, wrote in her proposal for the exhibition that it sought to address questions in relation to Pacific peoples of 'identity, self-awareness and pride that are important to everyone'. Lao-Americans were invited to form one of the community advisory groups assisting in the creation of exhibits.

The Lao advisory group agreed that the fire-rocket festival was one that most Lao in Laos would accept as central to their cultural heritage in its combination of pre-Buddhist conceptions of fertility so important to an agrarian society with Buddhist conceptions of making merit that are basic to Lao Buddhist identity. The Lao community wished, however, to make the exhibit more than a commemoration of something only remembered about life in Laos. To make the *boun bang fai* a reality to Lao-Americans living in Seattle, leaders of the Lao community in 1993 approached the director of the Burke Museum to ask if the museum could serve as a venue for the festival in Seattle.

Professor Karl Hutterer, the Burke director and himself an anthropologist with long experience in Southeast Asia, including Laos, readily agreed to museum sponsorship for the event. A problem immediately developed, however, because the festival is supposed to conclude with the firing of the rockets which have been made by monks and lay men to inform the deities that it is time to send the rains. The Seattle and University of Washington police were not about to allow a very large rocket to be set off in the middle of the city. Also, Seattle has a reputation for being the wettest city in the United

States, so perhaps the gods do not need to be reminded to send rains. The Lao community found a way to adapt the festival to the Seattle milieu: Since 1994, the Lao festival held each year at the Burke has culminated with a procession in which hand-crafted rockets are propelled only by those who carry them about.

The festival in 1998, like its predecessors, began with a formal offering inside the Burke of food to Buddhist monks from local Lao-American temple-monasteries. Lao-American women, dressed in traditional skirts made of elaborate tie-dye silk, and men with traditional silk or cotton plaid scarves across their shoulders, placed food in the alms-bowls of the monks and then ritually presented the food to them. Non-Lao spectators witnessed the exchange of food for the teachings of the Buddha offered by the monks in the form of chanted sutras and a sermon. Following this, as in the Minpaku event, a meal was shared by all participants. Then, the procession moved in a boisterous way through the campus accompanied by the music of long drums, the Lao polyphonic reed instrument known as the *khaen*, and cymbals.

Inside the Burke Museum, the Lao exhibit in the now-completed Pacific Voices exhibition provides more information about the *boun bang fai* as it has been and still is practiced among Lao in both Laos and Thailand. For the other Asian American and Native American groups found in Washington State exhibits also represent cultural heritage, and cultural markers of identity in the present.

Most anthropologists are today very much aware that cultures cannot be treated as unchanging traditions and depicted as such in museum exhibits or ethnographic accounts. That ethnology is shaped by a politics of culture as well as informed by scientific methods was clearly evident in the marvelous exhibition, 'Images of Other Cultures' that was jointly mounted by the National Museum of Ethnology and the British Museum. This exhibition took place during my visit to Minpaku. As Associate Professor Kenji Yoshida wrote in his preface to the exhibition catalogue: 'The ethnological museum which functions as a vehicle for vicarious world travel is now a thing of the past. Today, the gaze cast upon "other cultures" by the collections and exhibitions of the ethnological museum is itself being called into question. And the need for this questioning is not limited to the museum'.¹⁾

Such questioning today comes not

1) Yoshida, K. and J. Mack (eds) 1997. *Images of Other Cultures*. Osaka: NHK Service Center.

The procession of rockets in the Lao festival in Seattle



only from the 'first world' but also from those peoples once considered, in Eric Wolf's apt term, 'peoples without history'. A particular salient example comes from the Hmong, a people whom ethnologists long presented (usually under the name of 'Miao' or 'Meo') as preliterate and living on the margins of the great civilizations of China and Southeast Asia. Thirty years ago the Australian anthropologist William Geddes made 'Miao Year', a film based on ethnographic research in a Hmong village in northern Thailand. This film depicted the people of this community as living a life almost entirely apart from the cultural influences of the modern world. In the mid-1960s, however the Hmong were, even as the film shows, intensely involved with the world market economy through the production of opium. And over the past thirty years the modern world in the form of state institutions, contesting armies, modern media, and tourists, has intruded into the lives of all Hmong peoples.

Recently, Prasit Leepreecha, a Thai Hmong anthropologist, has recorded for the village in which Geddes worked how pickup trucks have replaced ponies, how radios have replaced traditional forms of entertainment, how new cash crops have replaced opium. Despite such changes, these Hmong, like Prasit himself and like Hmong living in diasporic communities in North America and elsewhere, continue to identify as Hmong and seek, rightly, to be recognized as the ultimate authorities on what constitutes Hmong ethnicity.

The contest between ethnologists and ethnics over cultural identity was manifest in another museum event involving Hmong culture that I observed. In December last year, I paid a visit to the newly opened Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi, Vietnam. During a tour led by Professor Nguyen Van Huy,



Hmong women changing display at the Vietnam Museum of Ethnology in Hanoi

the director, a group of Hmong women came to the museum. They were from Sapa, near the border between Vietnam and China. As with other members of officially recognized ethnic groups (*dan toc*) in Vietnam, these women were allowed free access to the museum. They stood for a moment in front of an exhibit on Hmong which featured traditional women's dress. It soon became clear that they were unhappy with the way in which the clothing was placed on the mannequins. Professor Huy quickly accepted that the women were more authoritative than any of the researchers associated with the museum and invited the women to change the clothing.

While there remain ethnologists who continue to insist on their own superior authority in deciding what cultural heritage is associated with which people, the examples I have given here point to a very different conclusion. Ethnology today must be based on a dialogue between those who seek to understand other cultures and those for whom the assertion of their own ethnic identity entails a politics of culture.

Change, Continuity and Cultural Identity

Thomas M. Ernst

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I was pleased to arrive at Minpaku this year in time to see an important exhibition which marked the 20th anniversary of the National Museum of Ethnology: *Images of Other Cultures*.¹⁾ In addition to the many pleasures of the exhibition as a whole, I was also able to see some particular artefacts of special interest to those of us concerned with

anthropology in Papua New Guinea. These were shields from the Waghi Valley.²⁾ They are thoroughly part of the modern world, having designs from beer bottles among other motifs. Yet they are also a part of 'traditional' Waghi culture—a part which has reemerged with a resurgence of fighting in the Waghi Valley in recent times. These

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New Guinea, he moved to the University of Adelaide in Australia. In 1990, he moved to Charles Sturt University. He has continued working with the Onabasulu, and also does research on Australian society.

1) Yoshida, Kenji and John Mack (eds) 1997. *Images of Other Cultures: Reviewing Ethnographic Collections of the British Museum and the National Museum of Ethnology, Osaka*. Osaka: NHK Service Center.

2) O'Hanlon, Michael 1997. New Beer in Old Bottles: Hybrid Artefacts in the Pacific and Beyond, in Yoshida, K. and J. Mack, *ibid.*, pp.284-287.

3) O'Hanlon, Michael 1995. Modernity and the Graphicalization of Meaning: New Guinea Highland Shield Design in Historical Perspective. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* (N.S.) 1: 469-493.

People at the Onabasulu long house at Walagu in 1984. This type of house has remained similar since pre-colonial times. Photo by Isao Hayashi.

kinds of 'hybrid artefacts' are now attracting the attention of museums around the world.

It is not just the shields themselves that are of interest, however. In an earlier scholarly paper on these shields O'Hanlon draws attention to the way that the Waghi artist who painted the shields, and other people as well, talk about the designs.³⁾ He finds in this a kind of reflection on culture and design, and a discussion of it, in which the visual art is 'objectified'. This was absent in his earlier experiences in the region, although what people say now would have helped 'make sense' of the designs then.

Similar observations have been made in other parts of Papua New Guinea. People now explicitly talk about what were previously implicit categories of behavior and action. It happens in relation to house structures, features of the landscape and even social organisation. People now talk reflectively about aspects of the socio-cultural world which, in the recent past, were rarely so discussed. It appears at first as a kind of cultural 'self-awareness'. Frequently what emerges involves verbal images of continuity in both form and (to some degree) content. This is sometimes gratifying for anthropologists, as it appears to verify and elaborate earlier analyses. But in fact, these indigenous reflections frequently supersede those anthropological analyses in detail, elaboration and scope. Also, it is a badly mistaken conceit to think that cultural 'self-awareness' only occurs in the particular forms of verbal discourse which academics are most comfortable with. Discourses of practice and poetics of culture expressed in performative modes are equally effective. They are just less familiar and less easily accessible to academic analysts.

Many anthropologists are now considering the conditions under which anthropological knowledge was previously produced. The conditions for the production of these emerging changes in indigenous reflections on social and cultural life should be similarly considered.

On a recent visit to a village in Papua New Guinea that I and other anthropologists have visited off and on since 1969, these processes of change in reflection and discussion of aspects of culture were strongly apparent. The village is Walagu, one of a number of villages of the Onabasulu speaking people of the Great Papua Plateau in the Southern Highlands Province (see photo, p. 8). In 1969, this was a remote location and only recently effectively administered by the Australian colonial regime. Now it is on the edge of a large petroleum and natural gas development and the region is of great economic importance to the independent country of Papua New Guinea. Although they are still remote from any centres and have no income from the nearby developments, these developments have greatly affected all Onabasulu.

Many changes have occurred in ethnic relations in the immediate area. Interaction between the Onabasulu, and neighboring peoples such as the Huli to the north, have changed. A major part of that change involves how the Onabasulu speakers identify themselves. They have new ways of talking about the relationships as there are new ways of talking about the social categories, such as 'Onabasulu' and 'Huli', involved in them. In the 1970s the term 'Onabasulu' was seldom used. Now it is a part of everyday speech in a way it never was. So are the terms for neighboring groups like the Huli. One example is a new health centre that was opened in Walagu village in November 1995. It was signposted as 'The Onabasulu Mini Health Centre', a title that would have been unlikely a decade earlier.

Huli traders still come into the Onabasulu region to obtain black palm bows (see photo, p. 9), but now they are exemplars of Huli-Onabasulu interaction, not just trading partners. There is a great deal of discourse (and debate) in Walagu about what Onabasulu culture is, where its boundaries are, what its myths and stories tell about contemporary events, and so on. What is striking about all of it, is that social categories are now discussed as concrete entities. It is not that such discussions were totally absent or impossible before. It was just that these discussions were rare. They



were not appropriate then for making sense of social and historical realities. Now, in a nation-state and on the peripheries of global capital, they are.

The changes raise numerous interesting questions. A major one is, what is the impact on social life when the category 'Onabasulu' is spoken of as an objective reality as well as a participatory category? In considering this, it is important to remember that the new concrete social categories are not being invented in response to the institutions of capitalism or the Papua New Guinea state. Rather, concepts like 'Onabasulu' are being reinvented by local populations within a history that now includes these institutions.

Various philosophers tell us, as M. C. Dillon reminds us, that: 'Identification over time requires both constancy and change: the person I recognize today is the same person I saw yesterday in a different place in an evolving world. Not only has the background ... changed, but the perceptual theme, the person, has also changed in some respects—although in other respects he remains the same'.⁴⁾

This combination of the static and the changing within what is seen to be 'the same thing' over time has been the subject of much discussion. The contribution of anthropology, in a fashion characteristic of the discipline,

involves consideration of philosophical themes in the context of detailed ethnography. Any conclusions reached require philosophical speculations to be subordinated to the authority of the details of peoples' actual lived experiences.

These are difficult tasks to undertake. If it is hard to think about how persons remain the same while changing, how much more difficult is it to think about continuity and change in socio-cultural systems? One of the characteristic features of late modernity is the emerging politics of local 'identity' in global contexts. This politics sometimes leads participants to explicitly express previously implicit aspects of practice. Attempts to understand the possibilities for transformation and the nature of continuity in such political circumstances are important.



Two Huli who have come to the Onabasulu area in 1996 to obtain black palm bows. This trade has been continuous from pre-colonial times. Photo by Thomas Ernst.

4) Dillon, Martin C. 1988. *Merleu-Ponty's Ontology*. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press.

Exhibition

Mongolia: The Rise of the Nomadic Culture

Special Exhibition

White *gers* (tents or yurts) on the first floor of the Special Exhibition Hall, stand as if they are on the expanse of the Mongolian steppes. Light effects representing sunrise, rain, rainbow, and glittering stars symbolise space and the passing of time on the steppes. Paper sheep lead visitors upstairs, where the exhibition space surrounded by latticed walls is completely different. Arranged from the west, as inside a *ger*, are a men's corner with horse gear, an inner part with family portraits, and a women's corner with kitchen utensils. Especially precious articles from Mongolia are placed in the cases, while visitors can freely touch and try using various daily utensils and other objects. Here and there, visitors can discover various materials and devices that give insights to the experience of nomadic life.

Today's civilisations are reaching the limits of their development—their

problems are global problems, and we must be concerned about the future of humankind. Cultures and civilisations that emphasise material acquisition are questioned.

Nomadic life suggests some alternatives. The simple life on the steppes, with nothing extra, has everything that we have overlooked. Mongolia provides us with a reference point for thinking about the future of humanity and civilisations. This exhibition was held from 30 July to 24 November 1998 at the Special Exhibition Hall.

Yuki Konagana
National Museum of Ethnology



Mr Bat-Erdene, a Mongolian musician, plays the horse-headed lute with bow at the entrance hall of the National Museum of Ethnology.

Conferences

Foraging and Post-Foraging Societies: History, Politics, and Future

8th International Conference on Hunting and Gathering Societies (CHAGS 8)
26–30 October 1998

At this conference chaired by Shuzo Koyama of the National Museum of Ethnology and Jiro Tanaka of Kyoto University, researchers from 24 countries compared and discussed many aspects of the past, present and future of hunting and gathering societies. They found new insights and considered new directions for future research among these societies. There were 205 participants, 114 from overseas and 91 from Japan. 152 papers were presented. Richard B. Lee, one of the founders of the CHAGS series, has written a conference summary that will appear in the next issue of this newsletter.

Religion and Civilisation in the Twentieth Century

7th International Symposium, Tradition and Change of Ethnic Cultures among the Twentieth Century
4–6 November 1998

A three-day symposium at the National Museum of Ethnology was held to discuss how religions in the twentieth century have civilised the uncivilised societies, and what problems have resulted. Fourteen papers were presented, and ten discussants participated in the symposium.

The main theme of the symposium was the influence of Christian missionary activity in the non-Christian world after the French Revolution. The symposium adopted the following viewpoints: (i) religion and civilisation are not fixed and solid systems—they change; (ii) we do not seek out and compare essential differences between religions and between civilisations, instead we view them as having mutual relationships that are significant for the history of civilisations and

human history generally.

Six sessions were held: (1) Logic and development of civilisation in Middle East and the Arab States; (2) Missions in the age of globalisation; (3) Changes in hunter-gatherer societies; (4) Religion, development, and nation; (5) The revival of religions in former socialist countries; and (6) Religions, and ethnic and communal problems.

In session 1, we examined the logic of civilisation for Islam and Judaism in the Arab States and Middle East. In session 2, we also discussed recent activities by Christian missionaries in the age of globalisation, taking examples from the USA and Korea.

In session 3, we examined how so-called hunter-gatherers have been affected by Christianity and what problems they are facing now, taking examples of Inuit in Canada and the Aborigines in Australia. In session 4, we examined how religion, development, and nation are involved with each other, with examples from Senegal and the Philippines. In session 5, we examined how religions have been revived in Romania and Uzbekistan, former socialist countries, where socialism eliminated religions, and how the two countries are re-consecrating their societies.

In session 6, we learnt about Karens living in the mountainous regions of Thailand and Myanmar, and communal problems in India, and we examined links between religion and ethnic or religious identity, and between religion and violence.

It is often said that Christian missionaries introduced civilisation to the non-Christian world, that they thought this was an important part of their mission work, and that this became their justification for imperialistic control by European countries. Whatever was the case, the activities of Christian missionaries, and the specific consequences for local societies and cultures have been discussed little in the fields of anthropology and ethnology.

At this symposium researchers interested in

Christianity and missionaries were joined by specialists on Islam, Judaism, and Hinduism. This provided a rare opportunity for discovering shared understandings. The discussions confirmed that the study of religion, and civilisation will remain important in the next century. Publication from the symposium is in progress.

Yoshio Sugimoto
Symposium Convenor
National Museum of Ethnology

The Changing Paradigm of Mongolian Studies: Between Documents and the Field

22nd International Symposium, Division of Ethnology, The Taniguchi Foundation
11–18 November 1998

The twenty-second international symposium examined 'The Changing Paradigm of Mongolian Studies: Between Documents and the Field' from 11 to 18 November. The participants discussed the so-called perestroika in Mongolia and prospects for Mongolian studies in the future.

Mongolia has been democratised since 1990s and is trying to move towards a market economy. Mongolian society has been greatly changing, and for researchers the research environment and political conditions have also been changing rapidly. Ethnological studies are no longer restricted by the socialistic ideology that existed before. One consequence of being freed from that ideology is that nomadic pastoralism will no longer be regarded as an out-of-date life style. Historical records have been made more accessible. Field work in ethnology and other academic disciplines have been liberalised. Interdisciplinary and international field work will be easier to carry out in the future.

Thus Mongolian studies are at a turning point. The nine participants in the present symposium represented the disciplines of sociology, anthropology, ethnology, linguistics, and history, and

came from Russia, USA, UK (paper only), Mongolia, China, and Japan. Three people from Germany, Mongolia, and China participated as observers, and many Mongolian students studying in Japan attended.

The results of the symposium will be published in English as soon as possible. One of the most important phenomena reported was 'renomadisation'. Vladimir V. Graivoronskii, a sociologist from Russia, recognised this new phenomenon and introduced the term 'renomadisation', after looking at demographic statistics obtained since the collapse of cooperative society. In discussing this phenomenon, several sub-themes came to the surface. These included the revival of traditional communities, the spread of wealth disparity, changes in social relations within this wealth disparity, redistribution of pasture, and the transition to a market economy. Researchers can only grasp the actual situations of 'renomadisation' through field work, and should respond in some way to the contemporary issues involved in 'renomadisation'. Analyses of the sub-themes will be helpful for Mongolia in the future. Researchers now can use literary sources more freely than ever, and new historical studies will be important for understanding the present situation.

Another key topic, 're-Mongolisation', was introduced. Katsuhiko Tanaka, Japanese linguist, described from his philological viewpoint the dawn of the Mongolian studies by Buryat-Mongols, and emphasised their significance with the expression, 'From object to subject'. Two Ordos Mongolians, Chogt (Yang Haiying) and Solongod Horcabaatar, presented a paper on 'Documents and field work'. Djab Naminow Burchinow, himself a Kalmyk Mongolian, read a paper on Kalmyk Mongols. It is timely that the Mongolians are now conducting ethnological studies on their own culture.

Yuki Konagaya
Symposium Convener
National Museum of Ethnology

News

It is no easy thing for us to follow the ever increasing flood of academic publications. Recently we were informed of two useful international anthropological indices on the Internet:

<http://lucy.ukc.ac.uk/AIO.html> and

<http://wwwsoc.nacsis.ac.jp/jse/library/frame.html>.

The former, maintained by the Department of Anthropology, the University of Kent, covers widely the international literature of anthropology. The latter specialises on recent Japanese publications and is maintained by the Japanese Society of Ethnology. Both sites refer to Minpaku's publications.

Visiting Scholars

The following visitors have been sponsored by the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, Sports and Culture (Monbusho):

Simpson, Dr Roger

is Assistant Director of the Centre for English Language and British Studies at the University of East Anglia, Norwich, UK. He is the author of *Camelot Regained: the Arthurian Revival and Tennyson 1800-1849* (1990) and many articles on nineteenth- and twentieth-century literature. His main research interests are twofold: the modern revival and reinterpretation of earlier legendary heroes; and Anglo-Japanese cultural relations. During his five-month stay at Minpaku, he hopes to combine these interests by researching the changing fortunes of the Yamato Takeru legend in Japan and overseas.



Lkhagvasuren, Mr Ichinkhorloogin

was born in Arkhanggai,

Mongolia in 1956. He studied history and ethnology, and learned Japanese at Moscow University. He



investigated the Uriyangkhai people in Altai, as a researcher of the Academy of Sciences in Mongolia. He was Director of the National Museum of Mongolian History from 1992 to 1996 to promote the democratisation of museums. He is now an advisor to the Mongolian Cultural Heritage Centre. He is staying at Minpaku as a visiting scholar from 29 June to 28 December 1998 to study nomadic cultures, and to assist in organising our special exhibition on Mongolia.

Bao, Dr Zhiming

is Associate Professor of the Department of Ethnology, Central University of Nationalities,

China. He completed his PhD in sociology and social anthropology at the Peking University, China in July 1994. His major research



interests are comparative methods in sociology and anthropology, social structure, social change, ethnic relations and environments. His areas of interest are Inner Mongolia, especially agricultural Mongolian area, and Tibet. He will stay at the Museum as a visiting associate professor from 14 September 1998 to 13 September 1999.

Tongli, Dr Urbanus

is Director of the Research Institute Rebongan Didi in Ujung

Pandang, Indonesia. His major research interests are comparison between modern and traditional societies, and comparison between traditional societies in Eastern Indonesia. In both cases, society is considered as a 'total being'. He is a member of the Equipe de Recherche d'Anthropologie Sociale: Morphologie, Echanges (ERASME, CNRS), Paris, France. At Minpaku, he is preparing a monograph on Toraja society.



Maxwell, Robyn Ms

is Senior Lecturer in Art History at the Australian National University and Senior Curator of

Asian Art at the National Gallery of Australia, Canberra. She is the author of *Textiles of Southeast Asia: tradition, trade and*

transformation (OUP 1990, reprinted 1994), *Cultures at Crossroads: Southeast Asian textiles from the NGA collection* (Asia Society, New York, 1992), and other articles on Indian and Southeast Asian art, especially textile history. She is currently writing a new history of Southeast Asian art for the Thames & Hudson World of Art series. At Minpaku she is working with long-time colleague Shinobu Yoshimoto on Asian textile projects.



Publications

The following were published by the Museum during the period from June to December 1998:

◇ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, vol.23, no.1,

October 1998. Contents: E. Kuroda, 'From Murals to Portable Murals: Transformations of the Expressions of Resistance of Mexican-Americans (A Perspective)'; Y. Furuya, 'Negotiating Art/Culture: Guatemalan Indigenous Painters'; I. Hayashi, 'The Topology of Dream Narratives: Narratives by Spirit Mediums among the Bedamuni, Papua New Guinea'; H. Watanabe, 'Jomon Clay Figurines and the Goddess Cult: An Ethnoarchaeological Study, part 2'; and Y. Nishi, 'The Development of Voicing Rules in Standard Burmese'.

◇ *Bulletin of the National Museum of Ethnology*, vol.23, no.2, December 1998. Contents: C. Shirakawa, 'The Titular System of Tongoa, Vanuatu'; Y. Fukao, "'Miaohui" as Self-Organization in Northwestern China in the post-Mao Era'; and M. Mori, 'Tantric Buddhist Art from Cuttack District, Orissa'.

◇ Shamsul A. B. and T. Uesugi (eds), *Japanese Anthropologists and Malaysian Society*. Senri Ethnological Studies, no. 48, xiii+161 pp., June 1998.

◇ Shima M. and R. L. Janelli (eds), *The Anthropology of Korea*. Senri Ethnological Studies, no.49, ix+237 pp., September 1998.

◇ Zhou Dasheng and S. Tsukada (eds), *Cultural Change and Interactive Dynamics among Ethnic Groups in China*. Senri Ethnological Reports, no. 8, 465 pp., September 1998. Contributors are Zhou Dasheng, Ding Yizhuang, Zhao Jiawang, Cen Xiwen, Huang Caigui, Yin Shaoting, Chen Guoan, Jiang Bingzhao, Qin Jinting, Duan Mei, Xia Jingfeng, Xu Ping, Taryo Obayashi, Yuki Konagaya, S. Tsukada, Fei Xiaotong, Chen Liankai, Wang Tianxi, Jin Binggao, Zheng Xinzhe, Yuan Shaofen, Zhou Xing, Wu Jingzhong, Lu Xiuzhang, Xu Lin, Li Kunsheng, Mao Jizeng, Zhu Rongga, Ma Rong, Y. Nagano, K. Hasegawa, and H. Yokoyama.

Correction

The name of author Jia Huixuan was misspelled in our previous issue: MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter No. 6, page 6. We apologise for this mistake.

Notice

Our new postal code, e-mail address, phone and fax numbers are as follows:
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MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter

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MINPAKU Anthropology Newsletter is accessible through our homepage at: <http://www.minpaku.ac.jp/eng.htm>

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